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A PSYCHO-ANALYTICAL STUDY OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

By LORINE PRUETTE

The life of Edgar Allan Poe might be considered an unhappy record of that "disaster" which "followed fast and followed faster" this man of brilliant capacities till it drove him into opposition with most of the world, deprived him of the love he so inordinately craved, paralyzed his creative abilities, seduced him to seek a vague nepenthe in the use of drugs and stimulants, and, its relentless purpose achieved, cast him aside, a helpless wreck, to die from the darkened tragedy of a Baltimore saloon. Without further following such an anthropomorphic conception of fate, we must be impressed that both environmental circumstances and natural inheritance seem to conspire to cast the young poet in a rôle that is both sombre and wild, with a beauty that chills even more than it saddens.

The psychoanalyst who seeks to probe into the earliest details of life to find there the causes of many of the associations and complexes, which even then shadow forth the developments of later years, will be troubled in the case of Poe with both scanty and conflicting data. The attempt has been made in this paper to follow those accounts which seem to be stamped with the strongest degree of authenticity or at any rate probability.

Edgar Poe was born in Boston, January 19, 1809, while his parents were playing in a local theater. They were at that time very poor, so that his birth, in spite of distinguished ancestors, may be considered lowly, both from the standpoint of wealth and of the social status which players then occupied. Yet from his paternal grandfather, a general of revolutionary fame, he boasted of high lineage, and he consistently asserted his pride in being descended from a woman at once so beautiful and so noble as his mother, who both honored and was honored by her profession. Such assertions as these suggest that he spoke quite as much to assure himself as to convince others. While the reality allowed him full right to take pride in his descent, yet circumstances so contrived to cloud over

that reality as to make his proud and sensitive spirit constantly alert against the possibility of an indignity.

The father of Poe was a victim of consumption, as was later his cousin-wife. Soon after the father's death, the mother died in abject want in Richmond, leaving her three small children to the mercy of strangers. Edgar was then two years old. The orphans were adopted by different families and seem to have known very little of each other. The elder brother William was, to quote from the words of a cousin, J. P. Poe, "a man of taste and genius, and wrote many fugitive verses, which have been lost, but which are said to have exhibited poetical power of a high order." He was not averse to the flowing bowl, and after his rejection as a lover, went to sea, where through recklessness he got into a sailor's scrape; he died at the age of twenty-six, leaving behind him the reputation of great but wasted talents. The youngest child, Rosalie, was so hopelessly dull that she could never attain proficiency in anything at school; she was utterly incapable of procuring her own maintenance, and after the family which had at first taken her in ceased to befriend her, she led for many years a precarious existence till she was finally admitted to a charitable institution in Washington. There she was credited with many eccentricities; she died at the age of sixty-four. Samuel Poe, a notable oddity of Baltimore, is said to have been the poet's uncle. His father, educated for the law, found such an existence unbearable, and after several rebellions separated himself from his family, marrying the English actress, Elizabeth Arnold, and adopting her profession. These facts seem to indicate a decided neurotic taint in Poe's paternal inheritance. This inferior nervous system predisposed many of the family toward flights from reality, alcoholism being their favorite form of erethism. Practically nothing is known of Poe's maternal inheritance, Elizabeth Arnold having been an orphan born at sea. She is said to have been extremely talented in singing, acting and painting. Edgar inherited her artictic ability, was very clever at drawing and passionately fond of music. Along with these gifts of the muses he inherited also those characters which were to bring him at last to an end sadder and more terrible than even that of his young actress mother, starving in Richmond.

A few weeks after Mrs. Poe's death, the Broad Street theater where she had been acting, was consumed in the awful conflagration of Christmas Eve, 1811. The death of so many distinguished people caught in this fire-trap sent a thrill of horror through the United States and was discussed in hushed

tones by the Virginians for many years thereafter. The story of this event and the sight of the burnt building where his beautiful mother had so often graced the stage, must have had a powerful effect upon the dawning imagination of young Edgar, so that even at this early age there appeared to him the trilogy which so possessed his mind in after years—death, love, and beauty.

Now a tubercular father and cousin, an eccentric uncle, a drunkard brother as well as many relatives known for a "too free use of the bottle," and an imbecile sister, coupled with the peculiar genius of the poet himself, his sensitiveness to the effects of stimulants and temporary fits of insanity toward the last of his life, form fairly conclusive evidence that there was in the Poe family a decided organic inferiority. The lesion on the brain from which Edgar suffered in later life may have been either the result of syphilitic infection or apoplexy, or caused by an inherited inferior brain for which, according to Lombroso, genius is an over-compensation. (1, b.)

On the death of his mother, Edgar was adopted and baptized into the family of John Allan, a Virginia planter. From the childless wife of Mr. Allan the boy received considerable affection, though it is improbable that she was ever able to give any real understanding to her brilliant foster son. The adoptive father seems to have regarded him with an ambivalent feeling of good and ill will. In early years he was undoubtedly proud of the boy's beauty and precocity, and delighted to have him in to entertain guests after dinner by reciting long passages of poetry. The strain of such occasions must have been severe to the sensitive, excitable child. It is in such festive gatherings that he is said to have acquired, at an early age, the taste for alcohol which was later to play such a sinister part in his undoing. Dr. Bransby, under whom he studied in England for five years, described him as "a quick and clever boy" who "would have been a very good boy if he had not been spoilt by his parents," who "allowed him an extravagant amount of pocket-money, which enabled him to get into all manner of mischief." (7) His early boyhood, then, was passed as the spoiled child of indulgent parents, who gave him pocket money rather than love and sympathy. Poe himself, in speaking of his foster parents, says that he never received the parental affection or family sympathy for which he longed. But according to his biographer, John H. Ingram, "Throughout life a morbid sensitiveness to affection was one of Poe's most distinguishing traits," and it is highly probable

that any normal affection would have seemed insufficient to the neurotic boy.

The Allans sailed for England in June, 1815, taking with them their adopted son. Edgar was placed at school under Dr. Bransby in Stoke-Newington, then a suburb of London. This historic old place, with its shadowed walks and memories of great and ill-fated lords and ladies, became the home of the child of genius during the next five years; years in which the childish imagination was quickening into life, fed on the lore of the classics and the pervading atmosphere of antiquity; years in which the passionate love of beauty turned to the loveliness of the old English town for gratification; years, too, in which the first attempts at verse-making were begun. It goes without saying that had the sensitive boy spent those five impressionable years in a different atmosphere—had he then known a normal home life and formed the normal associations toward a father and mother—his story must have been vastly different. His absence from the Allans at this period definitely precluded the establishment of ties of affection which might in later years have changed both his attitude and theirs. In 1820, again in the summer, Edgar returned with the Allans to America. The importance to the dreamy child of these two long sea voyages must have been tremendous. Sea voyages predispose to introspection, and six weeks at sea on these two occasions provided a great stimulus to the boy's imagination and love of the beautiful. Many of his stories show clearly the effect of the sea upon him, and the close observation which he must at some time have given it.

Returning to Richmond Edgar Allan entered a fashionable preparatory school. As he grew older he came to realize the anomalous position which he occupied in the Allan household and among the arrogant, aristocratic sons of Richmond. "His supremacy in intellectual training and his easy physical prowess made him the most illustrious school boy in Richmond, but he was not allowed to derive pleasure from this high eminence. His playmates, too well trained in genealogy and taught an extravagant pride of ancestry, did not let him forget that his mother was an actress and that the privileges he enjoyed and they envied were owed to the beneficence of a Scotch merchant. These reminders of his inheritance and environment forced him into an unnatural moodiness and deprived him in large part of that frank and friendly companionship based upon a sense of total equality." (9b, Intro.) Such a situation, of course, increased Edgar's rebellious pride, made him feel the necessity for defending himself against

the slightest suggestion of inferiority. Feeling or imagining himself either tolerated or scorned steadily intensified his desire for superiority. He became a daring swimmer, took great risks to show himself above others, and would endure no implication that any one was his equal in his chosen sport. His early fondness for Byron possibly led him to make this identification with the British poet who was also noted for his prowess as a swimmer. His leadership in intellectual pursuits must have caused him to incur still further the enmity of his schoolmates. He appears to have made no effort to ingratiate himself with the young aristocrats; he would be sought rather than seek others. One of his schoolmates at this time says, "Poe, as I recall my impressions now, was self-willed, capricious, inclined to be imperious, and though of generous impulses, not steadily kind, or even amiable; and so what he would exact was refused to him." (7) The result of such a strained situation was to be expected. The adolescent boy withdrew more and more within himself, seeking consolation in his own dreams and mental imagery, so that by the time he reached the University of Virginia, at the age of seventeen, he is spoken of as having many noble qualities and being endowed by nature with great genius and diversity of talent but with a retiring disposition and possessing few intimate associates.

Poe was registered at the University of Virginia from February 14 to December 15, 1826. He was in good standing with the faculty and obtained distinction at the final examination in Latin and French, then the highest honors to be obtained. It had been the theory of Jefferson, whose creation the new University was, that there should be no restrictions on the students, other than the expectation that they would conduct themselves as gentlemen. The young bloods threw themselves with zest into the freedom of such a life; most of them wealthy and of high lineage, they set themselves to lead the life of reckless extravagance, of mingled bravado and chivalry, which they considered characteristic of a gentleman at that period. Gaming and drinking were indispensable to their ideas of what a gentleman should do. Poe fell readily into both these diversions, gambled recklessly and left the University owing \$2,000 as debts of honor. In his drinking he was noticed to drink a glass of punch at a gulp, apparently craving the stimulation rather than the flavor of the drink. One glass, too, was said to be all that he usually desired. This habit of drinking *en barbare*, as Baudelaire calls it, he kept up all through life. (12, p. 33.) At the University, he

was known for his ability in writing extravagant stories, as well as in verse-making.

The organic inferiority of both lungs and mind, if we follow the theories of Adler, demanded compensation, which the youth found in drawing and in writing stories and poems. (1, b.) His "will to power," as we have seen above, would brook no superior, nor even equal, in either physical or mental pursuits, and it was this intolerance of the claims of mediocrity which brought upon him in later life the enmity of much of the literary world. He, himself, was known to both deny and affirm his great ambition, but his ideal goal of superiority as a "litterateur" must be considered the "guiding fiction" of his life. In his poems and in his stories he consistently narrowed his attempts to the one field in which he was pre-eminent, the depicting of beauty and horror. His insistence, as a critic, that beauty is the sole motive of poetry, may be regarded as an attempt to place the stamp of critical approval on that which he himself did best. His feeling of "degradation" and of "inferiority" fired him with the passionate determination to be "on top." If his "masculine protest" could be satisfied in no other way he turned to the degrading of others, as witness his attacks on Longfellow and other poets as plagiarists. Poe himself believed that his absolutely unswerving devotion to truth was responsible for his scathing criticisms, but even when true, as they generally were, such criticisms represented not an abstract devotion to truth, for which he was willing to suffer deprivation and hardship, but were rather due to the pressure of his own guiding fiction, striving toward the maximization of his ego-consciousness. With women poets, Poe was seldom, almost never, critical. His desire for superiority seemed with women to take an entirely different form. He had the characteristic over-valuation of the opposite sex which, according to Adler, is invariably connected with the neurotic constitution. (1, a.)

The conclusions of Brill, based on studies of only or favorite children are quite applicable to Edgar Poe. Brill found that the adult only child shows one prominent feature, namely, he is a very poor competitor in the struggle for existence. (2.) After leaving the University the young Poe entered Mr. Allan's office, where he found the work intolerable. Just as his father had done before him, he shirked facing the hard facts of prosaic, everyday life, to seek the freer atmosphere of the artistic world, where he could obtain greater gratification for his egoistic impulses. Going to Boston, the city his mother had loved and where she said she had found her "best and

truest friends," he published a thin volume of youthful poems which attracted little attention. He was then nineteen and some of the poems had been written when he was twelve. Unable to support himself by literary endeavor in the city of his birth, he joined the army as a private, where he distinguished himself by his exemplary conduct and became a sergeant-major at the age of twenty. Lieutenant Howard testified later that "his habits are good, and entirely free from drinking;" Captain Griswold considered him "highly worthy of confidence;" Colonel Worth said that his deportment was "highly praiseworthy and deserving of confidence." (6, p. 71.) His foster father then secured him an appointment to West Point, which he resigned in five months. A. B. Magruder, a contemporary, writes: "He was an accomplished French scholar, and had a wonderful aptitude for mathematics. . . . He was a devourer of books, but his great fault was his neglect of and apparent contempt for military duties. His wayward and capricious temper made him at times utterly oblivious or indifferent to the ordinary routine." (6, pp. 84-5.) His resignation not being accepted, and finding the life of the cadet so irksome, he deliberately infringed the rules and brought upon himself a courtmartial and dishonorable dismissal. His conduct and his foster father's speedy remarriage after the death of Mrs. Allan in 1829 definitely severed his relations with Mr. Allan and removed any possibility of his securing the inheritance which he had been brought up to expect. From this time on his life is a weary record of struggles for the bare necessities of life. At the time when his first tale was accepted he was in such a deplorable state as to be too ashamed of his clothes to appear in decent society. In spite of his acknowledged genius and great industry, he was condemned to the life of a very poorly paid hack writer and magazine editor, was never able to make any headway towards securing anything approaching financial independence, his young wife dying without even enough covering for her bed.

Brill further found that the only boy, constantly associating with grown-ups, "is usually precocious even in childhood, and as he grows older he finds it very hard to associate with persons of his own age." (2, p. 258.) Bohannon by his extensive studies of only children confirms this judgment. He says, "134, out of a total of 269, get along badly with others, 54 only fairly well, while only 81 seem to be normal in their social relations. When they disagree with other children it is usually because of a desire to rule. If they fail in this desire they are likely to refuse to associate with the children

who cause the failure, and in a measure succeed in the wish to have their way, either by choosing younger companions whom they can control, or older ones who are willing to grant indulgence." (3, p. 489.) While Poe impressed many with his brilliancy and charm, his erratic conduct constantly estranged from him even those friends he did make—and he seemed to make enemies far more easily than friends. He had the characteristic tendency of the neurotic of beginning life anew with each new friend and each change of circumstance, feeling a new enthusiasm and another opportunity, which he lost through the vagaries of his own conduct. In this connection his will to power manifested itself through his frequent reiteration that he had thousands of friends. Bohannon found precocity also to be the most prominent trait of only children. Poe's precocity has already been mentioned. It seems probable that no other English poet has written at so early an age such good poetry.

Likewise Brill found that the only child, through the coddling of his parents, is in adult life unable to bear the slightest depreciation. Poe showed this characteristic time after time in his undignified replies to criticisms which a more evenly balanced nature would have ignored. Also the only child develops into a confirmed egotist and is conceited, jealous and envious. After precocity, Bohannon found as most prominent characteristics: selfishness, imaginativeness, affection, jealousy, mental defects, temper, self-will, vanity—all of which are more or less exemplified in the character of Edgar Allan Poe. His depreciation of so many of his literary brethren has already been noted. He himself declared, "my whole nature utterly *revolts* at the idea that there is any Being in the Universe superior to *myself*!" (7.) We see, then, the years of his life spent as the spoiled child of the Allans combining with his neurotic inheritance to effectively inhibit his making the necessary adjustments to the demands of reality. Bohannon's studies trace a further parallel. He found the only child has a less healthy and robust constitution, more commonly suffers from mental and physical defects, his social relations are characterized frequently by friction and his peculiarities more pronounced. Finally, Brill concluded from a study of 400 patients that the "majority of only children do not marry at all or they marry some near relative whom they unconsciously identify with their parent image." (2, pp. 260-1.) Edgar Poe also fits into the scheme, he marrying his first cousin, Virginia Clemm, although it seems doubtful if he married her for the above reason so much as because he was able to find

security in the maternal love of her mother, as perhaps an unconscious manifestation and inhibition of the incest desire.

In considering the love life of Poe there were so many women whom he addressed in enraptured terms of adoration that it is difficult to know which, if any, had any lasting influence upon his development. His mother was to him an idealization of feminine charms, about as tangible as the vanished fragrance of unseen flowers. His boyish poet-soul, musing over the memory of a beautiful and unknown mother, whose tragic fate could not but win his sympathy, and clothing her image in all the matchless virtues of a fertile imagination, created around her name the first of those sadly lovely and unreal women who move softly through his stories and poems.

His foster mother provided his wants and even luxuries as well as some affection, but seems in no way to have satisfied his passionate desire for love and approval. It is significant that, as one of his schoolmates remarked, he was never known to take any boy into his home, always preferring to go to theirs. While in school in Richmond, at the age of fourteen, he met Mrs. Helen Stannard, the mother of a boy friend, and on her speaking kindly to him, became at once her humble adorer, offering to her the white flame of his adolescent worship. She became the confidant of all his boyish sorrows and the redeeming influence of his turbulent and passionate youth. On her death he felt himself intensely bereaved and could not endure the thought of her lying lonely in her tomb in the neighboring cemetery. So for months he is reputed to have gone nightly to the graveyard for solitary vigils by her tomb, keeping warm the memory of her who had been kind to him. His analytic mind showed always a peculiar fascination for the secrets of the tomb, a desire to probe into the last hidden process of life's disintegration. His feeling regarding his friend's loneliness was but one example of the idea by which he was haunted through life: that the dead are not wholly dead to consciousness. This theme is repeated many times in his writings; for instance, in the revival of his dead wife in the tale "*Ligeia*," or in the terrible return of the Lady Madeleine in "*The Fall of the House of Usher*." His broodings in the darkened cemetery by the tomb of the one person he felt had understood him must have laid a foundation for much that was weird and abnormal in his after life. The melodious poem, "*To Helen*," was inspired by the memory of this lady, whom he called "the one idolatrous and purely ideal love" of his boyhood. At another time he said, "The boyish poet-love is indisputably that one of the human senti-

ments which most nearly realizes our dreams of the chastened voluptuousness of heaven."

As a youth in Richmond he fell in love with S. Elmira Royster who lived opposite the Allans. She remembers him as a beautiful boy whose general manner was sad, "warm and zealous in any cause he was interested in, being enthusiastic and impulsive." The two young people became engaged, but her father, thinking her too young, intercepted all the poet's letters from the University of Richmond, and not until a year or so later when she became Mrs. Shelton did he learn why his passionate appeals had met with no response. It was at this time that Poe left Richmond and the office of Mr. Allan to seek his fortune in Boston, and it is entirely possible that the hurt to his vanity, to his insistent "guiding fiction" that he must be supreme, drove him away that he might avoid seeing the girl he desired possessed by another. In his youth he appears to have loved two other young women, one a cousin, Miss Elizabeth Herring, the other Miss Mary Devereaux, both of Baltimore, where he went after leaving West Point. Mordell (9) calls attention to the fact that by the age of twenty-three he had lost his mother, his foster-mother and Mrs. Stannard by death, and had parted from three sweethearts. These deaths and rejections Mordell held to be the cause of Poe's preoccupation with the subject of the death of beautiful women. It would seem, however, that such cause must be sought in the peculiar quality of the poet's own temperament rather than in external circumstances. The happenings of his early life undoubtedly must have conditioned his emotional reactions, but the close connection between love and death seems to have been the particular obsession on which his neurotic temperament fastened itself.

At the age of twenty-seven Poe married his fourteen-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm. For some time previously he had made his home with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, and from an early age Virginia had adored him. The attachment between him and his aunt was always very strong, she laboring and suffering for him as would a mother for an only son. Virginia's beauty and grace and sweetness, as well as her talent for singing, identified her with the image of the young and beautiful mother he had never known, while the maternal care and devotion of Mrs. Clemm offered him a refuge and safety from the troubles and disapproval of the outside world. His mother-image, being a creation of his own imagination, may be said to have split to take in the two personalities of his wife and mother-in-law—the one a radiant young creature,

satisfying his esthetic cravings, the other tender and untiring in maternal devotion satisfying the neurotic craving for protection. In later life Poe found many women friends, women of the highest attainment and character, who were his warmest defenders and for whom he expressed the deepest sentiments of affection. Among these were Mrs. Osgood, Mrs. Richmond, Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Helen Whitman. From the peculiar character of his "will to power" it is doubtful if individual women ever influenced him much. His nature demanded the adoration and approval of "woman," rather than sexual conquests, and he worshiped in his poems a feminine idealization to which he ascribed various names. These women are never human; they are not warm flesh and blood, loving, hating or coming late to appointments—they are simply beautiful lay figures around which to hang wreaths of poetical sentiments. His emotional interest lay in himself, rather than in outer objects; he wished to be loved, rather than to love.

The poetry of Poe reveals two things, a very considerable degree of introversion (in the sense in which Jung uses the term) and a flight from reality. His poems are to an unusual degree "Out of Space—out of Time." Where a Byron or a Shelley revolted against political injustice and became the ardent apostles of liberty, Poe passed serenely through the troublesome years of anti-slavery agitation apparently untouched by the passions of those around him, worshipping only the Beauty whose expression is Art, interested only in the inner conflict within his own soul. In his themes he is neither American, nor Virginian, nor of the nineteenth century. For him the world was depreciated till it scarcely existed; finding reality not to his satisfaction he fled to a world of his own creating. As he said in his story "Berenice": "The realities of the world affected me as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams became, in turn,—not the material of my everyday existence—but in very deed that existence utterly and solely in itself." Barbey d'Aurevilly speaks of what he calls Poe's "sècheresse," the terrible dryness of his art, and says, "His intellect was real; everything else about him was exquisite feigning. His passion, his human sympathy, his love of nature, all the emotions that go into his fiction, have a counterfeit unreality." (5, pp. 127-8.) This view accords well with Jung's theory of the introvert who, interested in thinking rather than in feeling, assumes the conventionally correct emotions. Poe himself wrote: "In the strange anomaly of my existence, feelings with me *had never been* of the heart, and my passions *always were* of the mind." This last is in line with his general atti-

tude toward women which allowed him to love intellectually so many women, without craving the physical expression of that love. The Freudians would consider this the result of the damming of the libido, perhaps due to some early experience, and they would support their view by calling his stories of horror expressions of anxiety, which to them always has a sexual connotation. It is quite as plausible to accept his own explanation and to hold that his passions were largely of the mind, which, as noted above, is entirely consistent with the introverted type. Lowell, in his "Fable for Critics," confirms this, saying that Poe "has written some things quite the best of their kind. But the heart somehow seems all squeezed out by the mind." Poe wrote to Lowell at the time when he was thinking he had found in the New England poet a congenial spirit: "I have been too deeply conscious of the mutability and evanescence of temporal things to give any continuous effort to anything—to be consistent in anything. My life has been *whim*—impulse—passion—a longing for solitude—a scorn of all things present, in an earnest desire for the future." Mrs. Whitman, in her introductory letter to Didier's Life of Poe, says that "his proud reserve, his profound melancholy, his *unworldliness*—of nature made his character one very difficult of comprehension to the casual observer."

The small volume of verse on which rests Poe's substantial claims to poetic genius, represent the work of his life which he was constantly refining. He composed with the care and effort of the introvert, revising his poems many times, usually to their improvement, intent on the perfection of quality rather than quantity. His themes are few, not from any paucity of imagination but from a complete absorption in a few dominant ideas. He sought, not the varied pleasures of the world, but the interpretation of Beauty alone, the highest form of which he felt to be linked always with melancholy. In "The Assignation" he says "there still lurked (incomprehensible anomaly!) that fitful stain of melancholy which will ever be found inseparable from the perfection of the beautiful." He constantly moved in his poetic imaginings among

" . . . the ideal,
Dim, vanities of dreams by night—
And dimmer nothings which were real—" (Tamerlane)

In struggling with the hard, unlovely realities of life, he cried out

"Oh! that my young life were a lasting dream!
 My spirit not awakening, till the beam
 Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.
 Yes! tho' that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
 'T were better than the cold reality
 Of waking life, to him whose heart must be,
 And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
 A chaos of deep passion, from his birth."

And later in the same poem entitled "Dreams":

"Dreams! in their vivid coloring of life
 As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife
 Of semblance with reality which brings
 To the delirious eye, more lovely things
 Of Paradise and Love—and all our own!
 Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known."

In "A Dream Within a Dream" we find rebellion against the disappointments of life.

"I stand amid the roar
 Of a surf-tormented shore,
 And I hold within my hand
 Grains of the golden sand—
 How few! yet how they creep
 Through my fingers to the deep,
 While I weep—while I weep!
 O God! can I not grasp
 Them with a tighter clasp?
 O God! can I not save
 One from the pitiless wave?
 Is *all* that we see or seem
 But a dream within a dream?"

In still another poem called "A Dream" is seen the contrast between what he has and what he has wanted, between the real and the ideal world of fancy:

"In visions of the dark night
 I have dreamed of joy departed—
 But a waking dream of life and light
 Hath left me broken-hearted."

In his "Sonnet—To Science" he calls science the vulture which has

" . . . torn the Naiad from her flood,
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
 The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree."

The shimmering iridescence of "Al Aaraaf," that mosaic of sensuous beauty of sight and sound, the music and glowing images of which haunt our senses even while the mind does not comprehend it, opens with the description:

"O! nothing earthly save the ray
(Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye
As in those gardens where the day
Springs from the gems of Circassy—
O! nothing earthly save the thrill
Of melody in woodland rill—
Or (music of the passion-hearted)
Joy's voice so peacefully departed
That like the murmur in the shell,
Its echo dwelleth and will dwell—
Oh, nothing of the dross of ours—
Yet all the beauty—all the flowers
That list our Love, and deck our bowers—
Adorn yon world afar, afar—
The wandering star."

Of his "Politian" he says:

"He is a dreamer and a man shut out
From common passions."

He speaks to the singing Israfil:

"Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour;—
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours."

He is constantly manifesting in his poems the desire to flee the imperfections of this world. But even in his dream world he is sad; he loved melancholy and kept her ever close to his side. In his "Fairy-Land" are

"Dim vales—and shadowy floods—
And cloudy-looking woods,
Whose forms we can't discover
For the tears that drip all over."

His "City in the Sea" is a picture of beauty desolated, of death reigning in the courts of life and love:

"There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye—
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swellings tell what winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea—
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene."

The poems of Poe are songs of sorrow: beauty is in them, most often dead beauty, love is there, most often the love of those who are dead to him, and madness is there, as if the expression of the prophetic powers of his unconscious. Often enough, in moments of extreme depression, under the influence of drugs or in the temporary insanity induced by the use of stimulants, must he himself have felt those "evil things, in robes of sorrow," which "Assailed the monarch's high estate." The "Imp of the Perverse" came to him in actual life, and forced him to make appearances which he could neither have desired nor have calculated to benefit himself. His behavior in Washington which lost him the government appointment he desired, and his gratuitous insult to the Bostonians when, on being asked to lecture, he delivered a poem he had written as a child, must be considered as the perverse manifestation of "the will to power" which is gratified by putting a depreciation on others through one's own unbecoming conduct. This same striving for superiority is evidenced in "Israfel:"

"If I could dwell where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody;
While a bolder note than his might rise
From my lyre above the skies."

Poe's heroes are largely autobiographical; they are melancholy men, pursued by unrelenting fate; they are neurotic, hypochondriac, monomaniac, victims of vain delusions; they are the prey of melancholia, insane from sorrow or from the thirst for revenge. In "Eleanora" he seeks to reassure himself, to take the proudly characteristic attitude of defiance to the views of the world. He writes: "Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence: whether much that is glorious, whether all that is profound, does not spring from disease of thought,—from *moods* of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect." In the study of his own diseased thought he is distinctly psychological. He writes: ". . . what the world calls 'genius' is the state of mental disease arising from the undue prominence of some one of the faculties. The works of such genius are never sound in themselves, and, in especial, always betray the general mental insanity." (6, p. 230.) This appears to be the artist's foreshadowing of some of the views of Lombroso and Adler, as if Poe himself felt that only through his own defects was he able to secure that superiority his soul demanded.

Poe's favorite poem, "The Sleeper," is occupied with his dominant theme, the linking of sex and death. "All Beauty sleeps!"

"The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully—so fearfully
Above the closed and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid."

This is only one of the many pictures he has given us of the couch of beauty which is also a bier. "To One in Paradise," the "Sonnet to Zante," "Lenore," "Ulalume," "Annabel Lee" and the world-famous "Raven" are concerned with reflections over a beautiful woman who is loved and dead. "Annabel Lee," written after his wife's death, is reminiscent of his experiences as a boy when he kept his lonely vigils in the cemetery beside the tomb of his friend.

"And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea—
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

In the same poem his proud spirit defies even death, when he cries

"And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:"

"The Philosophy of Composition" claims to explain the conception and composition of "The Raven," and while it is very doubtful if he really wrote the poem in any such impersonal, intellectual and rational manner, nevertheless his analysis contains some valuable hints, as when he writes: "Now, never losing sight of the object *supremeness* or perfection, at all points, I asked myself—'Of all melancholy topics, what according to the *universal* understanding of mankind, is the *most* melancholy?' Death—was the obvious reply. 'And when,' I said, 'is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?' From what I have already explained at some length, the answer here also is obvious—'When it most closely allies itself to *Beauty*; the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such a topic are those of a bereaved lover.'" The psychoanalyst is prone to seek farther into the poet's life to explain his pre-occupation with death. It will be recalled that his parents

died early and under most unhappy circumstances; many an hour the sensitive, imaginative child must have brooded over the tragic end of his beautiful, gifted mother. Then at the impressionable adolescent period came the death of the woman he worshipped, Mrs. Helen Stannard. A few years later died the foster mother. Three sweethearts were lost to him. Then there were the six years of dread for Virginia's life. These he has described in a letter to a friend, dated January 4, 1846 (7, p. 215): "Six years ago, a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever, and underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially, and I again hoped. At the end of a year, the vessel broke again. I went through precisely the same scene. . . . Then again—again—and even once again, at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death—and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly and clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive—nervous in an unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness, I drank—God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink, rather than the drink to the insanity. I had, indeed, nearly abandoned all hope of a permanent cure, when I found one in the *death* of my wife. This I can and do endure as becomes a man. It was the horrible, never-ending oscillation between hope and despair which I could *not* longer have endured, without total loss of reason. In the death of what was my life, then, I received a new but—Oh God!—how melancholy an existence." Allowing all due discounting for the poetic picturing of himself in constant agony, there can be no doubt that "the horrible, never-ending oscillation between hope and despair" of those six years must have made an indelible impression upon the poet's brain. Little wonder, then, that he wrote of the death of beautiful women.

In his stories Poe continues this linking of death with sex. Another factor manifests itself, namely, the sadistic delight in torture. Let us recall a few of these stories. In "Berenice" the lover tears out the teeth of his beloved before her body is cold within the grave; in "The Black Cat," having cut out the eyes of the cat he abhors, and later killed it, he is tormented by another cat whom his wife protects; maddened by her attitude he seizes an ax and cuts through her brain, after which he walls up the body in his cellar and laughs with glee at the fumbling search of the police; there is the murder

of Marie Roget, mutilation of the body and sinking of it in the river; in the "Murders in the Rue Morgue" he dwells over all the gruesome details of the masses of hair torn from the old woman's head, the throat cut with a razor, the daughter stifled in a chimney. The record was kept of seventeen stories of Poe as they appeared in an ordinary edition. Of these tales only three did not record violent or tragic deaths; these were "The Purloined Letter," which ends with a revenge; the "Man in the Crowd," a personification of crime, and the "Pit and the Pendulum," as terrible a delineation of torture as has ever been penned. Here is the death list from the other fourteen: Two dead in the "Gold Bug," two in "The Descent into the Maelstrom," the crews of two ships in the "Mss. Found in a Bottle," two in the "Murders in the Rue Morgue," two in the "Mystery of Marie Roget," two in the "Fall of the House of Usher," one in "William Wilson," one in "The Black Cat," one in "The Tell-Tale Heart," two in "The Assignation," the prince and his thousand attendants in "The Masque of the Red Death," one in "Berenice," two in "Morella," one in "Shadow." The list might be extended to cover the majority of the tales, but it seems unnecessary to pursue such inquiry further. Poe's mind was not only pre-occupied with death but with violent death, with murder and with pestilence.

The sadistic impulse is readily linked with sex. This is shown in a more subtle form in his favorite story "Ligeia." Here is the description of the bridal chamber prepared for his second wife:

"Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about—and there was the couch, too, the bridal couch—of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged limbs full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay alas the chief fantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height—even unproportionably so—were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window, the material was the richest cloths of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view . . . To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance this appearance gradually departed; and step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the

ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies—giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.” Here again is the picture of the bed which is a coffin, and the heavy curtains move uneasily like the pall which covers the last resting place of the dead. In the center of the room swings the censer around which writhe serpent-like flames; the censer is of gold. In tending the sick lady Rowena the husband offers her a cup of wine, into which he sees fall from an invisible hand a few ruby colored drops. Insensibly the reader feels that this is the revenge of the first wife, Ligeia, on the one who has taken her place. Rowena dies, then revives, dies again, revives. Each time the husband does what he can to assist her, although he seems to desire that she shall die utterly and leave him in peace. When he thinks she is at last quiet in her final sleep she rises and reveals to him the wild eyes and streaming hair of his lost love Ligeia.

In this tale are the three colors: gold and black and red, which Poe uses most; there is also beauty and death and sex. The bed and the entire room suggest a coffin in a tomb, the censer which is so frequently present in his descriptions is reminiscent of the church services which he attended twice each Sunday in England and so may very easily have become associated with funerals and death, the serpent-like flames represent the sex symbol. Here, too, is found another characteristic of much of his writing: the death wish, this time directed against the second wife. Then comes again the old feeling that the dead are not wholly dead and the dead woman is revealed as his first wife. Her expression is the projection of his own feelings of remorse both for taking another bride and for the death-wish against Rowena.

The imagery of this story Poe uses over and over again. “The Assignment,” another story of the love of a neurotic and the death of a beautiful woman, gives the picture of a strange room where “Rich draperies in every part of the room trembled to the vibration of low, melancholy music.” Here also are the swinging censers; the windows are of crimson tinted glass. In the “Pit and the Pendulum” the condemned wretch says, “I saw, too, for a few moments of delirious horror, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment.” In “The Raven” is heard the “silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain.” “Metzengerstein” has tapestry hangings which swing gloomily upon the walls. In “Shadow” are sable draperies. We read in “The Masque of the Red Death:” “The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a car-

pet of the same material and hue." It was not merely the thought of death which obsessed the poet, but death in all its details and in its visible symbol, the casket of the dead. From contemplation of the coffin the funeral pall or draperies came to have a peculiar significance, and when he wrote of rooms in which terrible deeds transpired he hung those rooms with the draperies of the dead. Not only that, but the curtains stir, to sad music, to strange winds, heightening the effect of horror, as the breezes which lift the pall over the face of the dead, increasing the agony of the spectator by giving the semblance of life where life has fled. In his poems are the same figures: a curtain is a funeral pall ("The Conqueror Worm"), "there passed, as a shroud, A fleecy cloud" ("Evening Star"), the eyes of the beloved "desolately fall on my funereal mind Like starlight on a pall." (To—.)

Then there are the colors: gold sometimes, but the principal contrast being the black and the red, symbols of death and of sex, the two ideas to which his thoughts ever returned. Black ships, black cats, clocks of ebony, sable condors, black marble flagstones, blackened goblets, black wings of pestilence, ebony tables, black silk-velvet palls, sable hearse plumes—these are a few of the symbolizations of death. For the sex motif are red lights, crimson-tinted glass, scarlet panes, the ruddy reflection from burning buildings, the fiery colored horse, fiery colored clouds, blood-red metal, intense light of rubies, the red of poppies, wine red as blood, rain that changed to blood, the fiery wall of the horizon, red clouds, the red eye of the sun, the crimson moon. No attempt has been made to cover all the uses Poe has made of the two colors, but it is very significant that these are the two which he used most often, and on which he rang so many changes. "The Masque of the Red Death" shows the effectively vivid combination of the two. The seventh chamber, completely covered with black draperies, has for windows scarlet panes, outside of which lamps are placed, so that the light falling on the black curtains must pass through the scarlet and so blend the two in a weird and unearthly aspect.

After the coffin, the poet's mind turned to the grave or tomb, and a vast number of allusions to this may be found in his writings. In "The Cask of Amontillado" he walls up his enemy in a living tomb; in "The Fall of the House of Usher" Madeleine is placed in a vault under the house; in "The Assignment" he rides in a "funereal gondola;" the "Gold Bug" is the story of treasure buried along with two men in a single grave; the Red Death masqueraded in grave clothes; he buries

his victim under the floor in "The Tell-Tale Heart;" he thinks "what sweet rest there must be in the grave" ("The Pit and the Pendulum") and in the same story "dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a tomb." He sings of the worm that never dies and prays that worms may creep softly around his sweetheart's body. In this connection also will be recalled his poem, "The Conqueror Worm."

The creeping of worms through dead bodies is considered a sexual symbol, and in this connection seems to show the presence of an erotic gratification at the thought of the dissolution of the bodies of beautiful women. The thought of the sweet rest within the grave is the desire to creep back into the mother's womb, which Jung and Silberer have considered so characteristic of the introvert.

The sadistic element is a compound of the sexual desire and the desire to give pain. These desires, repressed in Poe's life, are embodied in his poems and tales. With the child-wife, who was for years almost an invalid, he could never have enjoyed the satisfaction of a normal sex life, while his love for other women seems to have been of the mind rather than the body. Thwarted on this side of his nature, he turned to literary and artistic creation. In this he eked out the barest livelihood, and made enemies constantly by reason of his genius as well as of his intolerance of the claims of the many mediocre. Through the courts and by means of powerful invectives from his own brilliant, bitter pen he sought revenge on those who slandered or opposed him. But his victories were never wholly won; he never triumphed utterly over his enemies. His will to power, however, would be satisfied with nothing short of their annihilation, and, failing that in the actual physical world as well as in the literary and social world, he turned loose his sadistic impulses upon the creatures of his stories, some of whom must have represented very real figures to himself. In "The Cask of Amontillado" he says a wrong is never righted till the aggressor is punished and knows he is punished by the injured one. His imagination fairly gloats over the ingenious tortures it devises, many of which are equal to the most fiendish of the Inquisition.

Freud (4) has written on the effect which whipping has on children in developing both sadism and masochism. On seeing other children whipped the child feels that he is then the favored one, and a sadistic element of joy at suffering is introduced. On being whipped himself the child may be animated either by a sadistic or a masochistic desire. Masochism can be explained as a turning back of sadism upon the ego and is not itself a primary sex urge. It is a sort of narcissistic

or autoerotic sadism, or sadism focussed on the person's own genital organs. Poe went to school in England at a time when flogging was in order and as a little fellow he must have come in for his due amount of punishment. In school at Richmond, under a schoolmaster who believed greatly in the efficacy of flogging, Poe was never known to be punished, this fact being remarked on as quite unusual by one of his classmates. His experience in England would allow for development of either masochistic or sadistic elements; that in Richmond would reinforce the sadistic. The son of his foster father's partner remarked on the mean delight which Edgar, then a boy, took in tormenting a sensitive girl by pointing an imitation serpent towards her. (6, p. 25.) The serpent being the sexual symbol, the victim of the cruelty a girl, there seems an undoubted sadistic element here. The same gentleman tells of being thrown into some falls by Poe, who was then obliged to rescue the weaker boy, such an incident gratifying both the sadistic tendency and the will to power. The scene which he is reported to have made with the second Mrs. Allan when she was sick in bed indicates the same sadistic trend. All through his life the two things are found together: his will to power, thwarted, demanding sadistic revenge, his sadism gratifying and reinforcing his will to power.

There is an obvious death wish in many of the stories of Poe directed against a man. In "The Tell-Tale Heart" it is against an old man, whose murder he accomplishes; not satisfied with this he cuts off the limbs. He commences the story in an extenuating tone, but objects to being called mad. "True—nervous—very, very, dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad?" Then telling of the murder, he continues: "It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eyes! yes, it was this!" This detailed setting forth of lack of reason for a murder indicates in the writer a defense mechanism against the unconscious wishes. There was one man for whose murder all such reasons would apply: the foster father, Mr. Allan. There had never been love or understanding between the two. He had brought up the gifted boy as his son, giving him his name, then had cast him off without a cent. He had insulted him and driven him from his house. He had refused to pay Edgar's gambling debts which the boy regarded as debts of honor, and so had placed

him in a position of galling humiliation at the University. Had he died earlier Edgar would have inherited his gold. Had he not married again the fortune would probably have gone to the poet. In all the years of destitution, of pitiful struggle against a pitiless fate, never able to realize his cherished desire of founding a magazine because of lack of funds, seeing a young wife fade away lacking the money to buy her either the drugs or food her condition demanded—is it not reasonable to suppose that hatred should turn against the man who might have prevented all this, against the man who had taught him to expect and to desire luxuries and had disappointed him, against the man who had humiliated and insulted him? Object and passion were surely here sufficient for the unconscious if not the conscious death wish.

We come now to the masochistic tendency of Poe, which while not nearly so striking generally, is extremely well displayed in a few stories. It will be recalled that masochism is the regression of the sadistic impulse from the outer world onto one's own person. In "Loss of Breath" he describes his own tortures in tones of considerable enjoyment, his ears were cut off, incisions made into his stomach, the skull fractured, he was hanged and obligingly went through spasms for the benefit of the populace which encored. "A Predicament" tells the story of his being caught in a huge clock and the minute hand being imbedded in his neck till it cuts off the head.

"The ticking of the machinery amused me. *Amused me*, I say, for my sensations now bordered upon perfect happiness. . . . The eternal click-clack, click-clack, click-clack, of the clock was the most melodious of music in my ears. . . . The bar had buried itself two inches in my neck. I was aroused to a sense of exquisite pain My eyes, from the cruel pressure of the machine, were absolutely starting from their sockets . . . one actually tumbled out of my head . . . I was presently relieved . . . by the dropping out of the other eye.

The bar was now four inches and a half deep in my neck, and there was only a little bit of skin to cut through. My sensations were those of entire happiness, for I felt that in a few minutes, at farthest, I should be relieved from my disagreeable situation At twenty-five minutes past five in the afternoon precisely, the huge minute-hand had proceeded sufficiently far on its terrible revolution to sever the small remainder of my neck. I was not sorry to see the head which had occasioned me so much embarrassment at length make a final separation from my body. It first rolled down the side of the steeple, then lodged, for a few seconds, in the gutter, and then made its way, with a plunge, into the middle of the street."

The detail with which this is told and such expressions as "amused me," "a sense of exquisite pain," "entire happiness,"

are expressive of masochistic delight in suffering while the sardonic humor which laughs at his own dismemberment is a defense mechanism which the sensitive poet must have had to set up early in life, as protection against the ridicule of others.

"The Pit and the Pendulum" is the tale which best of all illustrates this masochistic tendency. It is told in the first person by a victim of the Inquisition. The man swoons on hearing his sentence and awakens to find himself in utter darkness in an underground cavern. There he narrowly escapes falling into a grewsome pool of nameless horrors. The invisible torturers plan for him one death after another, each more terrible than the last. In reality one feels that it is the author himself who takes delight in planning first, one affliction, then another, and who enjoys the thought of his own body suffering such agonies. The story is like a dream in which we watch ourselves take part, feel with ourselves and yet are detached from ourselves. After a swoon the poor victim awakens to find himself bound flat upon the floor, utterly helpless save for one free arm with which he can reach the scanty food at his side, which is carefully calculated just to keep life in his body. He hears above him a strange ticking and perceives in the shadows what appears to be a large pendulum. As the hours pass he sees this pendulum slowly descend. It approaches his bound body, hour by hour coming nearer; after every swoon he awakens to find it closer; he sees the sharp steel of its point; it cuts the air in ever wider circles; fascinated, yet horrified, he watches for days the approach of death; in detail the author describes his body sensations. The rats have come out to snatch the last remnants of food; at length it occurs to him that by smearing the meat upon his bonds they will gnaw away his fetters. While the rats gnaw at his cords the steel pendulum sweeps nearer and nearer, its sharp blade cutting the air just above him. It touches his garments, it cuts the cloth above his breast, and just at the last second he is freed and crawls away. Immediately the pendulum is drawn up, showing how incessantly he is watched. Then there comes a light within the chamber, a strange light which shows up the horrible, fantastic figures of devils and ghosts upon the walls; these figures begin to glow with heat, the walls and floor are hot to the touch, he perceives that they are entirely of brass and capable of casting out an intense heat. Tortured by fear and by the increasing heat, he creeps to the edge of the pool, and gazes down, too horrified by what he sees to take the plunge. It is evident that the torturers design to drive him into the pool and he determines

to resist at no matter how great suffering. The heat and his agony continue till at the limit of human endurance he is rescued by the armies of his sect who have taken the town. The meticulous detail of this story, the evident relish with which the author describes his sensations as, helpless on the floor he watches the nearing sweeps of the sharp blade of the pendulum, or as he recoils from the ever increasing heat, shows a masochistic delight in the thought of torture applied to his own body.

Mordell (9) calls attention to the stories of ratiocination of Poe which he considers a further indication of masochism. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Purloined Letter," and "The Gold Bug," are masterly examples of the analytical genius of Poe. The careful study of the tedious details of the mysteries of the first three as well as the solving of the cipher in the last tale represent the delight of a mind which loved to torture itself.

This is clearly shown in the man's life as well. As editor of a Philadelphia journal he made the boast that man could invent no cipher which human ingenuity could not decipher, and set himself the task of solving the many cryptograms submitted. The busy editor yet found time to spend hours exercising his mental faculties, as if delighted by the irritating burdens he could place upon his mind. It is reputed that he never failed to make good his boast.

The analytical powers manifested by Poe in such stories as those mentioned above, and also strikingly evident in much of his critical writing, was a characteristic not commonly associated with his other gifts. He insisted, however, that there could be no genuine imagination without this capacity for analysis of the keenest sort. Certainly the verisimilitude of his most extravagant tales is greatly increased by the background of incisive thinking and detailed analysis which they evidence. Oliver Leigh has made an interesting study in the character of Poe as shown by his photographs. One side of the head, if duplicated, gives a picture of the bulging forehead and heavy brain of the hydro-cephalic, the dwelling place of grotesque fancies and weird images of horror; the other side shows the square-headed, intellectual, analytical type, the brain which produced stories of ratiocination, critical essays of penetration and which distinguished itself in mathematics. (8) These two types, confined within one brain, gave the world the dreamer, the neurotic, the poet, the analyst and the thinker.

Poe's life after the death of Virginia in January, 1847, is sadder than any of his stories. The last two years before the

end in 1849 are a miserable record of alternating hope and despair, of a body and mind on the downward grade of deterioration, checked now and again before its approaching dissolution to turn and attempt to struggle back to sanity and health, yet never quite succeeding. After his own illness at the time of his wife's death he never regained his former capacity of productivity, although his last years were marked by fitful gleams of that genius which has won for him in Europe the reputation of being America's one really great and original poet. The mad poem, "Ulalume," with its melody and weird effects of nameless horror; the beautiful death poem, "To Annie," in which he thanks Heaven that "the fever called living is over at last;" the onomatopoeism of "The Bells" and the prose poem, "Eureka," belong to this period. In these last years he also met and loved Mrs. Helen Whitman, formed an ardent friendship for "Annie," Mrs. Richmond, and became engaged to Mrs. Shelton who, as Miss Royster, had been his boyhood sweetheart. The last thing he wrote was the lyrical "Annabel Lee," which was not published until after his death.

"Eureka" represents a new departure into philosophical realms. Dedicated to Alexander von Humboldt it is offered to "the dreamers and those who put faith in dreams as in the only realities" as a "Book of Truths, not in its character of Truth-Teller, but for the Beauty that abounds in its Truth; constituting it true." Through all its excursions into Physics, Astronomy and higher mathematics it manifests the neurotic passion for Unity—a seeking after a primal cause from which came all the Universe and to which all must return. In this are passages suggestive of Ward's "primal homogeneity" and theory of filiation. The poet anticipates the time when the myriads of individual intelligences will become blended, as will the bright stars, into One. He closes with the triumphant thought: "Think that the sense of individual identity will be gradually merged in the general consciousness—that Man, for example, ceasing imperceptibly to feel himself Man, will at length attain that awfully triumphant epoch when he shall recognize his existence as that of Jehovah. In the meantime bear in mind that all is Life—Life—Life within Life—the less within the greater, and all within the Spirit Divine." (10c, p. 315.)

The rumors which still go the round of the clubs in Baltimore claim that Poe was definitely syphilitic. This has never been established, although the lesion on the brain and cerebral congestion from which he suffered in his last years increase

the probability of the syphilitic infection. Whether this be true or not, he certainly displayed the same diathesis evidenced by many men of genius who are said to have been syphilitic—for instance, de Maupassant, Wilde, Nietzsche. In them, as in Poe, the phyletic tendencies died out and the egoistic ones came into dominance. This might be expected as a result of the disease which, depriving a man of the capacity for propagation, so cuts him off from the normal social interest in the future of the race, and turns the full force of the libido in the direction of personal ambition. Senescents and young people—those too young and too old to bear children—betray somewhat this same selfish absorption in the attainment of their own desires. These syphilitic geniuses, driven by the nature of their disease, to concentration upon their own egoistic development as the sole means of satisfying their will to power, became to a great extent hyper-individualized, with an over-expansion of the ego which made them anti-social. Their sex interests, too, seem to make at least a partial transference from the normal object of the opposite sex. Oscar Wilde's glittering descriptions—of pomegranates bursting in the sun, of tall reeds of fluted ivory, of pale poppies, ostrich plumes like white foam, robes of tissue gold, ceiling of fretted silver, green bronzes, agates, lapislazuli, bowls of amethyst, nightingales, and faint perfumes of jasmine,—the manner in which he lingers lovingly over long pages of rare gems, rich embroideries and draperies, strange, heavy odors, and the sound of weird, barbaric music, betrays more than a mere esthetic appreciation of beauty. There is a sensuous, sexual delight in these beautiful objects which far surpasses the normal enjoyment. Poe manifests this same attitude, although his range of enjoyment is more narrowed than that of Wilde, and even in his keenest appreciation of the loveliness of the inanimate world he is still haunted by the conceptions of horror and of death, which were to him inseparable from the realization of the highest beauty. This, too, would indicate a certain sexual displacement because of his constantly allying sex with death—the death of a beautiful woman being to him the most poetic of themes. Likewise his love of women, which was apparently of the mind so much more than of the senses, seems to signify an erethic sublimation which may have been, in the last analysis, based upon his physical condition.

It was in these last two years that Poe met and became engaged to Mrs. Helen Whitman. His love letters to "Helen" as well as his tenderly devoted letters to "Annie" at this time,

form some of the finest products of his later writing. These letters to "Helen" have been extravagantly praised as showing the passion of a lover. This they do not. They show the passion of a poet, writing about love. He was writing literature under the form of love letters just as he had under the form of love poems, stories or critiques. This passage has been often referred to as showing his deep devotion to Mrs. Whitman: (11, p. 71)

"As you entered the room, pale, timid, hesitating, and evidently oppressed at heart; as your eyes rested appealingly, for one brief moment, upon mine, I felt, for the first time in my life, and tremblingly acknowledged, the existence of spiritual influences altogether out of the reach of my reason. I saw that you were Helen—*my* Helen—the Helen of a thousand dreams—she whose visionary lips had so often lingered upon my own in the divine trance of passion—she whom the great Giver of all Good preordained to be mine—mine only—if not now, alas, then at least hereafter and *forever* in the Heavens. You spoke falteringly and seemed scarcely conscious of what you said. I heard no words—only the soft voice, more familiar to me than my own, and more melodious than the songs of the angels. Your hand rested in mine, and my whole soul shook with a tremulous ecstasy. And then but for very shame, but for fear of grieving or oppressing you—I would have fallen at your feet in as pure—in as real a worship as was ever offered to idol or to God. And when, afterwards, on those two successive evenings of all—heavenly delights, you passed to and fro about the room—now sitting by my side, now far away, now standing with your hand resting on the back of my chair, while the preternatural thrill of your touch vibrated even through the senseless wood into my heart—while you moved thus restlessly about the room—as if a deep Sorrow or more profound Joy haunted your bosom—my brain reeled beneath the intoxicating spell of your presence (and it was with no human senses that I either saw or heard you. It was my soul only that distinguished you there.) I grew faint with the luxury of your voice and blind with the voluptuous lustre of your eyes."

Yet at the same time that he was writing to Mrs. Whitman in such a vein, he was writing to "Annie" in letters breathing a spirit of entire confidence and love. Mrs. Whitman was said to have been greatly hurt by the publication of these latter letters, but they in no sense diminish Poe's love for her, nor show any evidence of faithlessness. In all these letters he was simply being true to himself—true to his own needs which required the loving approval of many women rather than the utter devotion of one, which could be satisfied as much by the sexless attachment to a married woman as by his engagement to Helen. After the breaking of the engagement with Mrs. Whitman, brought about by the efforts of friends of hers who objected to the match, Poe became engaged to Mrs. Shelton. His relations with women after Virginia's death represent a pitiful attempt to re-establish himself, to regain

from the eyes of those who loved him his own self-respect. Mrs. Clemm was then too old and broken to afford him the solace and safety he so hopelessly craved. But from among all his women friends, from all who had relieved the dark hours of Virginia's death, all those who from their attachment to the poet, ministered willingly to his mother-in-law after his death, no *Gradiva* appeared, not one was strong enough to rescue him from the perilous path his feet were straying on, not one was able to bring him peace, and faith and a renewed interest in life.

But more than a woman's love he was needing the attention of a specialist and this he did not receive. The libido of the poet, thwarted in its former expression through his poems and his love for his wife, sought here and there for other outlets, in his attachments to other women, in his titanic dream of the universe wherein he sought to grasp the very essence and simplicity of Unity itself, and in his obsessive desire to found a magazine of his own,—sought, but did not find. The lesion on one side of his brain (diagnosed by the famous New York physician, Dr. Mott, and the nurse, Mrs. Shew, Poe's faithful friend for years) would not permit him to use stimulants or tonics without producing total insanity. N. P. Willis, the editor, in a tribute to Poe immediately after the unhappy end in Baltimore, alludes to this: "We heard, from one who knew him well, . . . that, with a single glass of wine, his whole nature was reversed, the demon became uppermost, and, though none of the usual signs of intoxication were visible, his *will* was palpably insane." (6, p. 361.) Yet in times of deepest depression even insanity must have come to appear preferable to his own sad thoughts, and he sought feverishly "surcease from sorrow," whatever the means or the result. Before going to Richmond on the final journey he wrote to Annie: "No, my sadness is *unaccountable*, and this makes me the more sad. I am full of dark forebodings. *Nothing* cheers or comforts me. My life seems wasted—the future looks a dreary blank: but I will struggle on and 'hope against hope.'" (6, p. 303)

The attempted suicide from laudanum in Boston was only one evidence of the profound state of melancholia into which he had sunk. His physique deteriorated, and suffering from congestion of the brain, he should have been in a sanitarium instead of struggling about the country in the forlorn hope of founding his magazine. It was in quest of this "will o' the wisp" that in 1849 he set out for Richmond. He was at this time in the most wretched spirits; he expressed a pre-

sentiment to Mrs. Lewis that he would not return and arranged all his papers with Mrs. Clemm, telling her what to do in case he died. His delusion of persecution in Philadelphia is extremely suggestive of the beginnings of paresis. His state is described by Mr. Gill (6, p. 307):

"When he finally reached the residence of his kind friend, Poe was in a highly excited condition, almost distracted indeed. His mind seemed bewildered and oppressed with the dread of some fearful conspiracy against his life; nor could the arguments or entreaties of his friend convince him that some deadly foe was not, at that very moment, in pursuit of him. He begged for a razor for the purpose of removing the mustache from his lip, in order, as he suggested, that he might disguise his appearance, and thus baffle his pursuers. But, unwilling to place such an instrument in his hands, he was prevailed upon to allow his host to effect the desired change upon which he imagined his safety depended. The conditions of Poe's mind was such that Mr. Sartain, after persuading him to lie down, remained watching with him through the night with anxious solicitude, unwilling to lose sight of the unfortunate sufferer for a moment. The following night, Poe insisted on going out. He turned his steps towards the River Schuylkill, accompanied, however, by his devoted friend, whose apprehension was strengthened by the vehemence with which, without cessation, he poured forth in the rich, musical tones for which he was distinguished, the fervid imageries of his brilliant but over-excited imagination. The all-absorbing theme which still retained possession of his mind, was the fearful conspiracy that threatened his destruction. Vainly his friend endeavored to reassure and persuade him. He rushed on with unwearied steps, threading different streets, his companion striving to lead him homeward, but still in vain.

"Towards midnight, they reached Fairmount and ascended the steps leading to the summit, Poe all the while giving free scope to the conversational powers for which he was always remarkable, insisting upon the imminence of his peril, and pleading with touching eloquence for protection. . . .

"He didn't recover from this intense excitement until, subsequently, escaping from the house, he wandered out into the neighborhood of the city, and throwing himself down in the open air in a pleasant field, his shattered nerves found a comfortless but sorely needed repose. He woke refreshed. . . .

"All that he could call to mind were the entreaties and persuasions of some 'guardian angel' who had sought to dissuade him from a frightful purpose."

Such delusions would seem to have some correlation with the stories that he was unable to go to sleep after Virginia's death without the presence of Mrs. Clemm or some kind friend at his bedside. The fear of death, which he evidenced in his morbid prepossessions with the subject, may have grown in these "lonesome latter years" to be so portentous and awful a figure that he could never quite escape its shadowy horrors. Or again, the fear of life itself, of the futile mockery of life which he was leading, of himself as he had come

to be in his weakness, might have been the cause of much of his terror. Either fear could easily, in his overwrought state, have led to the thought of suicide, which he had already once attempted, and this may have been the "frightful purpose" from which the "guardian angel" sought to dissuade him.

Temptation conquered for the time being, there came to him a momentary peace from his delusions and fears and a new enthusiasm for laying hold on the actual facts of reality. The possibility of a new life beckoned him smilingly, and he arrived in Richmond in unusually good spirits. There he was welcomed and made much of by old friends. He even took the temperance pledge with much earnestness, obtained a position in the city of his childhood and planned to bring Mrs. Clemm down there. It was at this time that he is said to have renewed his addresses to Mrs. Shelton and she, a widow of independent means, to have accepted them. He lectured before a cultured audience, and left Richmond apparently more contented than he had been for some time, carrying with him, according to Bishop Fitzgerald (6, p. 322), the proceeds of his lecture, which amounted to \$1,500. Of the tragic, solitary end in Baltimore, little is known with any degree of accuracy. Poe arrived there at election time, at a period when it was customary for bands of men to seize helpless strangers, drug them and carry them from poll to poll, registering their votes for whatever party they desired. It is believed generally that he fell in with such a gang. However that may be, he was found in a barroom, insensible, in the shabbiest of clothes. He was taken to a hospital where he lived about a week. He is reported as being part of the time in stupor, part of the time in delirium, during which he conversed vacantly with spectral or imaginary objects. His replies to questions were entirely unsatisfactory. Two of his doctors report that he made the statement that his best friend would be he who would blow out his brains. (6, pp. 334-336.) So, on October 7, 1849, was extinguished that flame of genius which had blazed, now so fitfully, now so brilliantly, for forty years. In the mystery of his last days, his life did indeed go out like a candle in the dark.

It is doubtful if the circumstances of his death matter so very much. If Baltimore rowdies came in to hasten the end, they were simply an incident in the inevitable close. The man had burnt himself out. He had described his own condition when he wrote: "There are few men of that peculiar sensibility which is at the root of genius, who, in early youth, have not expended much of their mental energy in *living too fast*;

and, in later years, comes the unconquerable desire to goad the imagination up to that point which it would have attained in an ordinary, normal, or well-regulated life. The earnest longing for artificial excitement, which, unhappily, has characterized too many eminent men, may thus be regarded as a psychal want, or necessity—an effort to regain the lost—a struggle of the soul to assume the position which, under other circumstances, would have been its due.” (6, p. 231.) He showed at the last very clearly that “psychal” want, the struggle of the soul to regain the lost, and in the nature of the case he was doomed to failure. That last brief lifting of the clouds in Richmond could have been only temporary; his weakened body and the congestion of the brain from which he was suffering made inevitable the return of his former condition of melancholia. That diseased brain which had supplied his writings with all its morbid, beautiful imagery and haunting melodies of death, came finally by its defects to render his further progress and development impossible. And when it failed him, and there was no longer possible a continuation of the superiority which he had won in his chosen field, his proud spirit, his guiding fiction, must have sought relief in some form of insanity or in death. Insanity had begun, under the depression of melancholia and the delusions of paresis; death he had sought before and would have sought again; the darkened close in Baltimore came as a release—a release not to be regretted by any who love Beauty as an end in itself and who crave for its expression a form no less perfect than that which Poe was able to give in the days of his greatest power.

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